

Michigan Psychological Association

Testimony re HB 5488 and 5489

House Health Policy Committee

November 4, 2021

My name is Judith Kovach. I am a licensed psychologist and am here today representing the Michigan Psychological Association to speak in support of SB 5488 and 5489, which would include Michigan as a participating partner in PSYPACT, an inter-state consortium allowing licensed psychologists to practice telepsychology across state lines.

PSYPACT provides a mechanism to allow for the legal, ethical and regulated practice of telepsychology and temporary in-person, face-to-face practice and helps to:

- Facilitate the practice of psychology using telecommunication technologies (telepsychology) across participating state lines through Authorization to Practice Interjurisdictional Telepsychology (unlimited)
- Allow for temporary in-person, face-to-face psychological practice for up to 30 work days per year in each PSYPACT state through Temporary Authorization to Practice

The time since the pandemic has shown us the importance of telepsychology services to assist the citizens of Michigan in accessing mental health care. Virtually all mental health services have been delivered by telephone and video sites. The results have been very effective in meeting the state's mental health needs. Some of these services were provided to patients who resided or were temporarily located in other states. This legislation provides a mechanism to set rules for future telepsychology services.

Given the unavoidable life changes and challenges brought on by the pandemic, the need for mental health care has exponentially increased but the number of providers has not. PSYPACT would address this need.

PSYPACT would allow psychologists to increase access to care particularly for populations that are currently underserved, geographically isolated or lack specialty care.

Purpose and Need for PSYPACT

- Provide a mechanism to assist with regulation of tele-psychological services.
- The need to ensure the ethical and legal provision of tele-psychological services and reduce regulatory barriers while still protecting the public.
- The need to establish consistencies in the regulatory requirements around the provision of temporary in-person, face-to-face psychological services.
- Psychologists need the ability to practice via telecommunication without being licensed by multiple states. It is untenable to require psychologists to be licensed in each state due to cost, etc.

- Psychologists can provide better access to care to clients/ patients through the use of telecommunications technologies.
- It is unrealistic for regulatory bodies to allow psychologists to practice in their state without oversight
 - This compact is beneficial to both psychologists and patients. It is designed to reduce licensure barriers to the psychologist so they can deliver psychological services across States and create consistency in the requirements for temporary in-person practices. This does not remove a State's sovereignty over specific licensure matters.

The following twenty-six states have enacted PSYPACT legislation:

- Alabama
- Arizona
- Colorado
- Delaware
- District of Columbia
- Georgia
- Illinois
- Kentucky
- Maine
- Maryland
- Minnesota
- Nebraska
- Nevada
- New Hampshire
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Pennsylvania
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Utah
- Virginia

Our priority is for Michigan to join the effort to ensure and promote access and removing barriers to psychological and mental health treatment for Michigan residents.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 5488 and 5489.